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ABSTRACT

Spurred by the inclusion trend, adapted physical education (APE) has emerged as a fundamental education service for children with disabilities in recent years. Although only 15 states have a certification or endorsement in APE, the Adapted Physical Education National Standards examination has produced certified APE educators in 21 additional states. All states offer at least one course in APE at the undergraduate level; a few offer an undergraduate minor; but undergraduate majors are scarce. Many graduate programs offer majors in APE, but some school districts and states view APE as frivolous, especially in rural areas. Perspectives on APE from three states with large rural areas are provided. Florida has a strong emphasis on APE, with state certification, two university master's programs, a federally funded summer inservice program, and several distance education programs. In Texas, certification has a chance of passage after 25 years of lobbying. The state's 15 certified APE educators are in or near metropolitan areas. Rural school districts in north Texas contract with Texas Woman's University. Three other colleges are proposing personnel preparation programs, and two are planning distance learning projects. Alaska has high rates of suicide, student drug use, and high-risk behaviors, and most of its resources go to treatment instead of school health programs. Alaska Natives and disabled people receive especially little attention. APE is considered a related service in many districts. The only personnel preparation program for physical education in Alaska includes APE issues in the regular curriculum but plans to adopt a fifth year MAT model. (TD)

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PERSPECTIVES ON ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION SERVICES TO RURAL POPULATIONS

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PERSPECTIVES ON ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION SERVICES TO RURAL POPULATIONS

Adapted Physical Education is an instructional area that has emerged as a fundamental education service for children with disabilities in recent years. P.L. 94-142 (Education of the Handicapped Act) supplemented by P.L. 101-476 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA) and amended by P.L. 105-17 (amended IDEA of 1997) clearly outline Physical Education as a subject that must be provided to anyone receiving a "free appropriate public education".

The trend of inclusion further necessitates the need for the services of an Adapted Physical Educator. This becomes evident when one considers that the first attempt at inclusion usually occurs in physical education (Ryan, 1994). The Adapted Physical Educator is required to serve as the "resource" teacher in the gym.

A response heard from many administrators in rural areas to the question of whether or not they have access to an Adapted Physical Educator is that they have been including for years. It should be noted that inclusion is not just placing the child in the gym as a manager or scorekeeper. The purpose of inclusion is to place the child in the regular education environment with all needed supports (Block, 1994). It is common experience for districts that do not have access to an Adapted Physical Educator to be concerned about A.P.E. only when the threat of litigation is looming. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that inclusion for the most part is not being implemented correctly in Physical Education.

The purpose of this paper is to give a national overview of Adapted Physical Education, and present perspectives on A.P.E. in rural areas of three states. Representing the East will be Florida, the Central area will be represented by Texas, and the West by Alaska. These states were chosen because of their large rural area.

Nationally, 15 states have a certification or endorsement in Adapted Physical Education. They are: California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. South Dakota and Texas have endorsements under consideration. Arkansas and Kansas each had certifications but eliminated them due to the fact that so few people applied. West Virginia once had a dual certification for physical educators working with children with Physical Disabilities. However, this has been absorbed into the regular physical education certification (Nolan, 1998). All states offer at least one course in Adapted Physical Education at the undergraduate level, a few offer a undergraduate

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minor in A.P.E. New York, Indiana, and California are examples. Undergraduate majors in A.P.E. are scarce. However, there are a great number of graduate programs offering majors in Adapted Physical Education. Despite the availability of university personnel for consultation, many school districts and states still ignore A.P.E. as a valid instructional area or view the service as frivolous (Butterfield and Chase, 1990).

An Eastern state perspective - Florida

Florida is one of the few states that has a strong emphasis on Adapted Physical Education within Physical Education. Florida has two university programs that train adapted physical education teachers at the master's degree level. In fact, the program at the University of South Florida has received federal funding in this area for over 25 years. There is a state certification and many of the teachers complete their graduate studies in this area. Last year, however, this certification and the value of adapted physical education began to be called into question at the state legislative level. Some legislators attempted to have the certification removed, allowing any teacher to work in physical education with students who have disabilities. This has met with strong resistance from the county teachers and superintendents as well as the universities involved in adapted physical education teacher preparation. Over the past year, both the University of South Florida and the University of Florida have surveyed graduates of the certification process and the coursework received by the students in this process. Results from this survey have indicated an overwhelming support for the certification process and the value of course work that is covered in the program.

The University of South Florida is one of the few federally funded adapted physical education teacher preparation programs that receives funding for summer in-service instruction. The certification coursework is offered in one week blocks where teachers come and receive information related to that certification subject area from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm each day. The method of coursework delivery was designed specifically to take into account teachers from remote rural areas. The work is intensive but this method seems to be more acceptable to teachers from around the state who come in for three weeks to take the classes and then go back to the county they live and teach in. A stipend for these teachers is offered as part of the federal funding, and this helps offset the cost of accommodation and living away from home for this period. While the program does have a large number of teachers that come in from rural counties, most counties are close enough that participants in the summer certification program are able to travel home on weekends.

Although it varies from school district to school district, most individuals completing a masters degree in adapted physical education are employed as district consultants while teachers completing the certification process usually stay as regular physical education teachers that have classes that include students with disabilities. Consultants usually work on an intinerant basis and visit students once a week. Programs are developed with the existing teacher (who is hopefully certified in adapted physical education) and the existing teacher then pursues the program in the physical education

classes that the consultant does not attend. In rural districts, this is especially important as travel distance often limits the number of times that the adapted physical education consultant can visit, and most of the instruction and programming does fall on the shoulders of the school physical education teacher.

While it is true that adapted physical education is strong among teachers in the state of Florida, there are still many teachers in many rural counties that are not certified to teach students with disabilities with appropriate physical education programs. In these schools, many students with disabilities are "dumped" into inclusive instructional settings. Most of these physical education teachers argue that distance to appropriate training programs and the cost of taking these courses away from home prohibits them from becoming certified.

In an attempt to bridge this issue, the University of South Florida is working in technology to provide distance education models, materials and media that take the in-service instruction needed to the teachers in these rural locations. The School of Physical Education, Wellness and Sport Studies at the University of South Florida has already developed a laser disc program for instructing teachers on how to evaluate basic gross motor skill movement, and is currently engaged in developing a digital video disc entitled "Physical Activity For All", which will show teachers how to work with children who have disabilities and how to effectively integrate them into regular physical education classes. The University has also developed, and is currently testing, a computer program that will allow physical education teachers to learn basic sign language related to physical education. The program covers about 150 signs that are related to movement and sport and provides both instruction and testing opportunities on a compact disc that can be played on most personal computers. It is hoped that these programs when completed will be distributed to rural areas so that teachers can receive instruction via this technology when distance and cost makes direct instruction not viable.

Finally, the university is working on expanding its distance education capabilities through the School of Physical Education, Wellness and Sport Studies internet server. The server currently provides information on physical education programs in many of the counties in Florida, information related to legislation and the State Department of Education, professional information on physical education related web sites and physical education associations. The site can be accessed at the following world wide web address:

http://pe.coedu.usf.edu/

It is hoped that, in time, much of the coursework being offered as part of the certification requirement in adapted physical education will be offered over the internet in distance learning coursework that can be accessed either at school, or even in the teachers own time at home. The adapted physical education certification program is still very important to Florida's education system and teachers, and we wish to give every teacher in Florida the opportunity to receive training in it.

A Central state perspective - Texas

Since the enactment of P.L. 94-142, proponents of Adapted Physical Education in the state have lobbied to initiate a certification or endorsement in the field. It appears, that after twenty five years, an endorsement has a chance of passage. The necessity of a state endorsement is strong due to the shortage of Adapted Physical Educators in the state. In the last Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) report that included special physical educators, need was projected at 300 positions. The last Adapted Physical Education National Standards (APENS) examination yielded 15 certified Adapted Physical Educators. All of the 15 are located in or near metropolitan areas. An analysis of the Texas Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance membership indicated that 80 of 3574 members have Adapted Physical Education as their primary interest area.

The problem has increased with the thrust of the regular education initiative in public schools (Will, 1986) A major concern occurs when students with disabilities enter into classes and are taught by teachers or paraprofessionals who do not know the unique characteristics of these learners (Frey & Sandford, 1996) including medical considerations that relate to activity contraindications. During a recent in-service for physical education paraprofessionals the audience was asked if they had been trained for the occurrence of seizures. Not one of the 70 attendees answered in the affirmative. This lack of training increases the possibility of educational malpractice (Rich, 1973).

The employment of Adapted Physical Educators is confined mainly to the major metropolitan areas. Rural school districts in North Texas are serviced by contract with either graduates or doctoral students of Texas Woman's University. TWU has had federally funded personnel preparation programs in Adapted Physical Education for over 20 years. The rural school districts in the other areas, however, are not so fortunate.

To alleviate the shortage in the South Texas area, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi has taken a different approach to personnel preparation. In response to the trend of inclusion and the shortage of teachers qualified to teach classes containing children with disabilities, TAMUCC has proposed a personnel preparation program that would educate regular physical educators for the inclusive environment. This project will bring physical education paraprofessionals back to complete their degrees in Adapted Physical Education. This will be the only undergraduate personnel preparation program of its kind in the country. In four years, it will put a APE qualified physical educator at every school district in a 11 county area of the coastal bend of South Texas. Additionally, graduate personnel preparation programs are being initiated at Texas A&M - College Station and Texas Tech University. Finally, collaborative distance learning projects and internet courses are being planned by Texas Woman's University and Texas A&M - Corpus Christi to update the skills of regular physical educators who entered the field before the onset of inclusion.

A Western state perspective - Alaska

Introduction - The State of Alaska's Health: The state of Alaska is experiencing a health crisis of epidemic proportions. For example, The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data for Alaska (1997) indicate:

A.) 82% of all deaths for children and youth ages 5-24 are due to injuries (e.g. motor vehicle crashes, homicide, suicide, and other unintentional injuries).

B.) Alaskans of all ages have one of the highest suicide rates in the U.S. (Alaska: 23.6/100,000; U.S.: 11.2/100,000).

C.) 58% of middle school students have tried smoking at least once.

D.) 67% of middle school students report ever having had a drink of alcohol; 20% report ever having used inhalants; and 26% report ever having used marijuana.

E.) 32.2% of 14 year olds report having had sexual intercourse at least once.

F.) 34% of middle school girls describe themselves as overweight; 57.8% of girls are trying to lose weight.

Alaska invests most of it's resources into treatment. Very few resources are allocated to developing Comprehensive School Health Education (CSHE) programs. With the enculturated value by the dominant culture in our state being best described as "avoidance", underrepresented groups such as Native Alaskans and people with disabilities have received little attention regarding their health school health enhancement needs.

Health, Outdoor, and Physical Education (HOPE) Program at UAA: The HOPE program at UAA is the only personnel preparation program in health, outdoor, and physical education in Alaska. The program currently offers a B.Ed. in Health, Outdoor, and Physical Education with a teaching endorsement in physical education. Given the identified health crisis, the small number of HOPE faculty (3.0 FTE), dwindling resources, and a climate of complacency and fervor in protecting the Permanent Fund, infusing issues relative to adapted physical education throughout the curriculum is the most efficient approach to professional preparation for the HOPE program.

Adapted Physical Education at the DOE and at UAA: The Department of Education (DOE) will accept a declared undergraduate or masters degree in adapted physical education from the lower 48 for credentialing in APE. In many districts the inappropriate notion that adapted physical education is a related service has been adopted. For example, the Anchorage School District houses it's APE team in related services with PT and OT. Advocacy by HOPE faculty has failed to change this situation.

At present, HOPE faculty are advocating for the adoption of a fifth year MAT model with an endorsement in physical education. This degree will be linked to the B.Ed. and allow us to "stack" our audience (e.g. undergraduate and graduate combined), so that student enrollment will support the coursework. The MAT model will allow our students

to participate in a full year internship, including working with students who experience ability and ethnic diversity. Our approach with developing CSHE coursework and curriculum, including physical education, is to address student diversity within an ability, ethnic, culture, and gender context. The emphasis of the curriculum is on a health enhancement model which includes content, themes and strands such as creating behavior change, health and wellness issues for people with disabilities, and culturally determined movement alternatives for Alaska Natives, Hispanic/Latinos, Asian-Pacific Islanders... etc. Alaskans need to appreciate that school is an appropriate place to develop the values, knowledge, and skills needed to make healthy choices.

Summary

The information presented in this paper is only a thumbnail sketch of the state of APE in rural areas of the United States. Although only 15 states have certification or endorsement, the advent of the Adapted Physical Education National Standards (APENS) examination has produced many exceptional nationally certified Adapted Physical Educators in 21 additional states. There are many universities that offer Adapted Physical Education courses, at least on the introductory level. These universities have personnel qualified to consult on APE matters, assess children with motor problems and implement APE programs at the district level. Information on Nationally Certified Adapted Physical Educators can be found in the conference handout and at the APENS website mentioned earlier in this paper. Information on personnel preparation programs can be obtained from the Office of Special Education Research (OSERS) at the U.S. Department of Education. The resources exist to provide quality adapted physical education services to children in rural areas. The key is to network and collaborate to find the most cost effective way to provide those services. We hope this collaborative presentation sparked an interest in the reader to further pursue those avenues.

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